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EOC Spot Report Update #5: Region 6, Fire at International Terminal Corporation, Deer Park, TX (NRC# 1240304 and 1240312)

**US Environmental Protection Agency
Report as of March 21, 2019 12:30 EDT**

Overview: On March 17, the Region 6 Phone Duty Officer was notified by the NRC (1240304) about the fire at International Terminal Corporation (ITC) in Deer Park, Houston TX. According to the NRC report one of the tanks containing naphtha caught on fire, the total capacity of the tank is 80,000 barrels. Fire operations are still ongoing, with maintaining of the foam blanket in the secondary containment to prevent reignition of hot spots. Foam is being added approximately 3 times every 4 hours at a rate of 180,000 gallons of foam per foaming operation. The facility will open outfall 003 per foaming operation to manage water in the secondary containment to maintain current levels.

At approximately 3:00 am on March 21st elevated benzene levels forced the movement of the Incident Command from the tank farm area to Highway 225. Once EPA contractors detected levels in a residential area south of Highway 225, ITC recommended the City of Deer Park issue a community shelter-in-place and close Highway 225, which was performed at 4:50 am.

~~ITC DEER PARK has issued an evacuation order of 5 miles radius and has engaged in firefighting shore side. City of Deer Park, TX has also issued a shelter in place order. There have been no injuries reported.~~

State, Local, and other Federal Agency Action: Coast Guard Station Houston and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) are on scene. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) plume modeling indicated that it would not affect the Houston Ship Channel. An Incident Command Post has been stood up. ITC has contracted with an incident management team to help manage the incident. USCG personnel are participating in Unified Command, focusing on water operations in Tucker Bayou (booming and skimming of foam).

ITC is currently working on a plan for managing the water in the secondary containment once the fire operations have ceased. The facility plans to pump the water to an empty tank and then dispose of it as waste. They will coordinate with TCEQ water and RCRA programs on this strategy.

EPA Actions: EPA and START mobilized on March 17th and entered Unified Command with TCEQ, Harris County Pollution Control Services Department (HPCPS), and ITC. EPA START and ITC continued air monitoring throughout the night in the vicinity and downwind.

On March 21st, ASPECT continues to provide airborne sensing. Several very low-level detections of isobutylene and acetone have been observed at various locations from La Porte to west of the facility. These are most likely normal “air pollution” levels of compounds. The Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) bus arrived on March 20th to conduct air monitoring in communities around the city. Instantaneous monitoring of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) continues to be conducted by the responsible party. ITC air monitoring within the site and in adjacent industrial facilities are detecting elevated levels of benzene.

Two EPA START teams have completed air monitoring around the 14 identified Superfund NPL sites in Harris County to determine any effects of the plume at those sites, as well as taking readings downwind from the fire in various areas. No detections were identified. ITC continues to take hourly water samples at the ditch feeding into Tucker Bayou and sending the samples to an outside laboratory for analysis. Initial results are expected to become available between Wednesday and Friday. There is boom deployed in the ditch to capture the foam. Traces of foam have been observed in the ditch and Tucker Bayou by the U.S. Coast Guard. ITC has placed double containment boom along Tucker Bayou. Skimmers are actively removing foam from the bayou and pumping the material into vacuum trucks and storing the material in frac tanks onsite.

As of 0200 hours on March 19, 8 tanks containing gasoline blends, toluene, naphtha, xylenes, pyrolysis gasoline, and blended oils were involved in the fire, within the firewall. Three tanks (including 2 empty) are believed to have collapsed at this time.

As of 3:00 am March 20, ITC reported that all fires had been extinguished within the tanks. They are now in the process of cooling the tanks with water. Potential re-ignition is possible until all tanks have been sufficiently cooled. Unified Command recognizes the VOC levels may increase now that the fire has been extinguished.

Several school districts had earlier decided to stay closed on Wednesday due to the ongoing fire-fighting efforts and plume issues.

ASPECT conducted a third flight over the ITC fire on March 19, 2019. Plume geometry was assessed with the aircraft with findings showing the plume was about 47 miles in length, 17 miles wide at the largest extent and ranged in altitude from a floor of 1500 feet to a ceiling of 5000 feet. No chemical detections were reported on this flight.

~~ITC's contractor, CTEH, is monitoring for VOCs and BTEX under the plume downwind from the fire. EMSI has been contracted by ITC to supplement the CTEH monitoring and are utilizing~~

~~a mobile air monitoring unit. At the request of Unified Command, EMSI is monitoring identified environmental justice areas as well as areas around schools in the downwind areas of the plume.~~

~~2 EPA contractor teams continue to monitor in areas downwind from the fire site. A few minor VOC readings have been detected, but below health action levels.~~

ASPECT photos from March 19



Media Interest: High

<https://www.click2houston.com/news/fire-at-deer-park-storage-facility-finally-out-after-several-days-itc-says>

<https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/news/2019/03/20/itc-deer-park-fire-near-houston-extinguished-some.html>

<https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Deer-Park-chemical-fire-extinguished-overnight-13702369.php>

The HQ EOC will continue to monitor and provide updates as needed

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